

What is claimed is:

1. A method for screening outgoing video communications within an interactive television system, the method comprising:

5 intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

determining whether the recipient is included within an unauthorized recipient list; and

10 blocking the video communication request in response to the recipient being included within the unauthorized recipient list.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the unauthorized recipient list is caller-specific.

15

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request; and

locating an unauthorized recipient list specific to the caller.

20

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the video communication request is intercepted by an interactive television system associated with the caller.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the video communication request is
25 intercepted by an intermediate network node linking the recipient and the caller.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the intermediate network node is selected from the group consisting of a cable head-end, an Internet server, and a satellite broadcast center.

5

7. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying comprises:
extracting an identifier of the recipient from the video communication request.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the identifier is selected from the group
10 consisting of a name of the recipient, a network address of the recipient, and a network address of a communication system of the recipient.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the unauthorized recipient list
comprises a list of unauthorized identifiers, and wherein determining comprises:
15 determining whether the extracted identifier is an unauthorized identifier.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein blocking comprises:
notifying the caller that the video communication request has been blocked.

20 11. A method for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the method comprising:
intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

determining whether the recipient is identified within an authorized recipient list; and

forwarding the video communication request to the recipient only if the recipient is identified within the authorized recipient list.

5

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the authorized recipient list is caller-specific.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

10 identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request; and

locating an authorized recipient list specific to the caller.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the video communication request is

15 intercepted by an interactive television system associated with the caller.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the video communication request is intercepted by an intermediate network node linking the recipient and the caller.

20 16. The method of claim 15, wherein the intermediate network node is selected from the group consisting of a cable head-end, an Internet server, and a satellite broadcast center.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein identifying comprises:

25 extracting an identifier of the recipient from the video communication request.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the identifier is selected from the group consisting of a name of the recipient, a network address of the recipient, and a network address of an interactive television system of the recipient.

5

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the authorized recipient list comprises a list of authorized identifiers, and wherein determining comprises:
determining whether the extracted identifier is an authorized identifier.

10

20. The method of claim 11, wherein accepting comprises:
establishing two-way video communication between the recipient and the caller.

15

21. A method for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the method comprising:
intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;
notifying a third party concerning the identity of the recipient;
prompting the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video communication request; and
forwarding the video communication request to the recipient in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

25

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request; and
notifying the third party concerning the identity of the caller.

5 23. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
in response to not receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party
within an established time interval, blocking the video communication request.

10 24. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
in response to receiving an indication of rejection from the third party, blocking
the video communication request.

15 25. The method of claim 21, wherein the video communication request is
intercepted by an interactive television system of the caller.

26. The method of claim 21, wherein the caller and third party are each
associated with an interactive television system at a different location.

20 27. The method of claim 21, wherein the video communication request
includes live video of the caller, and wherein notifying comprises:
sending the live video of the caller to the third party.

25 28. The method of claim 27, wherein the live video is captured by a video
camera integrated with an interactive television system of the caller.

29. The method of claim 21, wherein notifying comprises:
establishing temporary two-way video communication between the third party
and the caller.

5 30. The method of claim 21, wherein accepting comprises:
establishing two-way video communication between the recipient and the
caller.

31. A method for screening video communications in an interactive
10 television system, the method comprising:
intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video
communication request;
determining that the recipient is not identified within a unauthorized recipient
15 list;
notifying a third party concerning the identity of the recipient;
prompting the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video
communication request; and
forwarding the video communication request to the recipient in response to
20 receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising:
identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request; and
25 notifying the third party concerning the identity of the caller.

33. The method of claim 31, further comprising:
in response to not receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party
within an established time interval, blocking the video communication request.

5

34. The method of claim 31, further comprising:
in response to receiving an indication of rejection from the third party, blocking
the video communication request.

10

35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:
adding an indication of the recipient to an unauthorized recipient list.

36. The method of claim 31, wherein the caller and third party are each
associated with an interactive television system at a different location.

15

37. The method of claim 31, wherein the video communication request
includes live video of the caller, and wherein notifying comprises:
sending the live video of the caller to the third party.

20

38. The method of claim 37, wherein the live video is captured by a video
camera integrated with an interactive television system of the caller.

39. The method of claim 31, wherein notifying comprises:
establishing temporary two-way video communication between the third party
and the caller.

25

40. The method of claim 31, wherein the unauthorized recipient list is caller-specific, the method further comprising:

- identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request; and
- locating an unauthorized recipient list specific to the caller.

41. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

- an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
- an identification component configured to identify the recipient using information contained within the video communication request; and
- an authorization component configured to determine whether the recipient is identified within the unauthorized recipient list and to block the video communication request in response to the recipient being identified within the unauthorized recipient list.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein the unauthorized recipient list is caller-specific.

43. The system of claim 42, wherein the identification component is further configured to identify the caller using information contained within the video communication request, and wherein the authorization component is further configured to locate an unauthorized recipient list specific to the caller.

44. The system of claim 41, wherein the interception component operates within an interactive television system of the caller.

5 45. The system of claim 41, wherein the interception component operates within an intermediate network node linking the recipient and the caller.

46. The system of claim 45, wherein the intermediate network node is selected from the group consisting a cable head-end, an Internet server, and a
10 satellite broadcast center.

47. The system of claim 41, wherein the identification component is further configured to extract an identifier of the recipient from the video communication request.
15

48. The system of claim 47, wherein the identifier is selected from the group consisting of a name of the recipient, a network address of the recipient, and a network address of an interactive television system of the recipient.

20 49. The system of claim 47, wherein the unauthorized recipient list comprises a list of unauthorized identifiers, and wherein the authorization component is further configured to determine whether the extracted identifier is an unauthorized identifier.

50. The system of claim 41, wherein the authorization component is further configured to notify the caller that the video communication request has been blocked.

5 51. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

an identification component configured to identify the recipient using
10 information contained within the video communication request; and

an authorization component configured to determine whether the recipient is identified within an authorized recipient list and to forward the video communication request to the recipient only if the recipient is identified within the authorized recipient list.

15 52. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

20 an identification component configured to identify the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

a notification component configured to notify a third party concerning the identity of the recipient and to prompt the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video communication request; and

an authorization component configured to forward the video communication request to the recipient in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

5 53. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

10 an identification component configured to identify the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

an authorization component configured to determine that the recipient is not identified within a unauthorized recipient list;

15 a notification component configured to notify a third party concerning the identity of the recipient and prompt the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video communication request; and

wherein the authorization component is further configured to forward the video communication request to the recipient in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

20 54. A method for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the method comprising:

intercepting a video communication request sent by a particular caller from a group of callers to a recipient;

25 identifying the particular caller and the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

locating an unauthorized recipient list specific to the particular caller;
determining whether the recipient is identified within the caller-specific
unauthorized recipient list; and
blocking the video communication request in response to the recipient being
5 identified within the caller-specific unauthorized recipient list.

55. The method of claim 54, further comprising:
determining whether the recipient is identified within a general unauthorized
recipient list; and
10 blocking the video communication request in response to the recipient being
identified within the general unauthorized recipient list.

56. A method for screening video communications in an interactive
television system, the method comprising:
15 intercepting a video communication request sent by a particular caller from a
group of potential callers to a recipient;
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video
communication request;
identifying the particular caller using information contained within the video
20 communication request;
locating an authorized recipient list specific to the particular caller;
determining whether the recipient is identified within the caller-specific
authorized recipient list;
determining whether the recipient is identified within a general authorized
25 recipient list; and

forwarding the video communication request to the recipient only if the recipient is identified within either the caller-specific authorized recipient list or the general authorized recipient list.

5 57. A method for screening incoming and outgoing video communications within an interactive television system, the method comprising:

intercepting a video communication request;

identifying the caller and the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

10 determining whether either the caller or the recipient are identified within at least one unauthorized list; and

blocking the video communication request in response to either the caller or the recipient being included within the at least one unauthorized recipient list.

15 58. A system for screening video communications, the system comprising:

means for intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

means for identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

20 means for determining whether the recipient is identified within the unauthorized recipient list; and

means for blocking the video communication request in response to the recipient being identified within the unauthorized recipient list.

59. A system for screening video communications, the system comprising:
means for intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a
recipient;

means for identifying the recipient using information contained within the
5 video communication request;

means for determining whether the recipient is identified within an authorized
recipient list; and

means for forwarding the video communication request to the recipient only if
the recipient is identified within the authorized recipient list.

10

60. A system for screening video communications, the system comprising:

means for intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a
recipient;

means for identifying the recipient using information contained within the

15 video communication request;

means for notifying a third party concerning the identity of the recipient;

means for prompting the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video
communication request; and

means for forwarding the video communication request to the recipient in
20 response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

61. A method for screening outgoing video communications within an
interactive television system, the method comprising:

intercepting an outgoing video communication request;

determining a rate for video communication established in accordance with the video communication request; and

blocking the video communication request in response to the rate exceeding a preset limit.

5

62. A method for screening outgoing video communications within an interactive television system, the method comprising:

intercepting an outgoing video communication request;

identifying a caller using information contained within the request;

10 determining whether a communication quota for the caller has been exceeded; and

blocking the video communication request in response to the communication quota for the caller being exceeded.

15 63. The method of claim 62, wherein the communication quota comprises a set number of minutes within a time interval selected from the group consisting of a day and a week.

20 64. The method of claim 62, wherein the communication quota comprises an amount of money allocated to the caller for communication.